

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as set forth hereinbelow.

1. (Currently amended) A method for automatically selecting and packaging items for mailing, comprising the steps of:

storing item characteristics for a plurality of items;

storing postal costs for packages based on package characteristics;

receiving a customer order specifying a plurality of items for a shipment, the shipment comprising at least one package;

storing a list comprising identifiers corresponding to the plurality of items specified items by the customer;

automatically determining a number of packages comprising the shipment and determining which items of the customer order will be contained in each package;

the determining step carried out based on the identifiers, the stored item characteristics corresponding to the identifiers and the postal costs for packages.

2. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the customer order is received by mail on a pre-printed form.

3. (Previously presented) A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein said stored item characteristic includes at least one of item weight, item thickness and item size.

4. (Previously presented) A method in accordance with claim 1 further including steps of:
printing respective mailers, each mailer corresponding to a package for the shipment, each mailer defining customer selected items to comprise the corresponding package;
placing each mailer on an assembly line; and
placing each customer selected item comprising each package on the corresponding mailer as the mailer traverses the assembly line.

5. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein:
each mailer comprises a printed paper mailer;
each paper mailer includes, on a first side, a bar code indicative of the items to be packaged with the mailer and on a second side a customer address.
6. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 5 wherein the assembly line comprises:
a scanner for reading the bar code on each mailer;
a plurality of hoppers, each hopper containing a plurality of like items; and
a mechanism responsive to computer control for moving an item from a hopper onto a mailer.
7. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 6 and further including a customer message on the front of a mailer readable by a customer and indicating that a customer order has been fulfilled in multiple packages.
8. (Previously presented) A method in accordance with claim 7 further comprising a step of shrink-wrapping each of the packages in a plastic wrap so that the customer address and customer message are readable through the plastic wrap.
9. (Previously presented) A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein the step of receiving a customer order is performed at a location geographically remote from the step of placing each mailer on an assembly line.
10. (Previously presented) A system for selecting and packaging items for mailing, comprising:
a processor;
a memory connected to the processor, the memory storing data and instructions for controlling the operation of the processor; the processor operative to perform the steps of:
storing item characteristics for a plurality of items;
storing postal costs for packages based on package characteristics;

receiving a customer order specifying a plurality of items for a shipment;
storing a list comprising identifiers corresponding to items to comprise the shipment;
automatically determining a number of packages comprising the shipment and
determining which items of the customer order will be contained in each package;
the determining step carried out based on the identifiers and the postal costs for
packages.

11. (Original) A system in accordance with claim 10 wherein the customer order is received by mail on a pre-printed form.

12. (Original) A system in accordance with claim 10 wherein the selected characteristic is chosen from the group comprising: item weight, item thickness and item size.

13. (Currently amended) A system in accordance with claim 10 further including ~~an assembly line and wherein the step of packaging each of the sub-orders comprises the steps of printing a mailer for each sub-order~~package in the shipment;
placing each mailer on the assembly line; and
placing each item in each sub-order~~package~~ on the associated mailer as the mailer traverses the assembly line.

14. (Original) A system in accordance with claim 13 wherein:
each mailer comprises a printed paper mailer;
each paper mailer includes, on a first side, a bar code indicative of the items to be packaged with the mailer and on a second side a customer address.

15. (Original) A system in accordance with claim 14 wherein the assembly line comprises:
a scanner for reading the bar code on each mailer;
a plurality of hoppers, each hopper containing a plurality of like items; and
a mechanism responsive to computer control for moving an item from a hopper onto a mailer.

16. (Original) A system in accordance with claim 15 and further including a customer message on the front of a mailer readable by a customer and indicating that a customer order has been fulfilled in multiple packages.
17. (Original) A system in accordance with claim 16 wherein the step of packaging each of the sub-orders includes shrink-wrapping each of the sub-orders in a plastic wrap so that the customer address and customer message are readable through the plastic wrap.
18. (Original) A system in accordance with claim 10 wherein the step of receiving a customer order is performed at a location geographically remote from the step of packaging each of the sub-orders.